

PALMER (T.S.)

RAY OF HOPE
POEMS,

BY

T. SHEWBRIDGE PALMER,

VETERINARY SURGEON,

WASHINGTON, D. C.



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R. BERESFORD, PRINTER, 523 SEVENTH ST.

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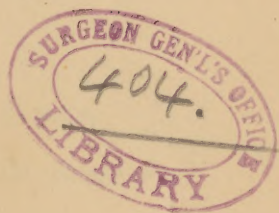
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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
TO
LIEUTENANT-COLONEL B. NORRIS,
U. S. ARMY,
AS A SMALL TOKEN
OF
MY HIGH ESTEEM
AND
GRATITUDE FOR MANY FAVORS
RECEIVED
IN FIELD AND CAMP,
BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

I trust that the reader will not deem me presumptuous in offering to the public the following pages in my hoary days, just as the sun is setting, leaving a ray of hope on the weather-beaten brow of the old soldier whose inherent birthright was the profession of arms.

T. SHEWBRIDGE PALMER,

Vet. Surgeon.

Washington, D. C.

EVENING DRIVE TO THE SOLDIERS' HOME.

Here comes a break, four in hand,
With ladies pretty as in the land;
Brows lily white, by flowery zephyrs fanned;
Lovely amazons in high demand.

Carriages, wagons, handsome carts and drays,
Driving all, fast as they please;
Sorrel, dun and dapple grays;—
Poor horses get but little ease.

These old soldiers lead a quiet life,
Without care or child or wife;
They are happy, there's no strife,
All is pleasure, light and life.

What gallant heroes saunter round,
(Their warlike appearance not often found;)
In history those warriors are renowned;
Look how they rush at the trumpet's sound!

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG.

[JULY, 1863.]

Longstreet's brigade advance on the little Round Top—
That bloody charge, with grape red and hot—
Under the smoke of three hundred guns, shell and shot,
The Confederates drenched with blood that spot.

With gallantry, nerve and determination,
With a foe worthy of their steel,
The Confed's are driven to desperation
As they see each regiment fall or reel.

Under the smoke of three hundred guns, shell and shot,
Each man charged, determined to fulfill his lot.
The Confederates drenched with blood that spot,—
On their graves bloom the flower forget-me-not.

Where is the soldier can check the tide of battle,
That gallant charge in the jaws of death?
Amidst thundering cannon and musket rattle,
The day is lost, but hope lives yet.

Lee's eyes moistened, a tear slid down the warrior's cheek,
And brave and noble soldiers did all but weep.
Oh, that night's dying cries! None could sleep.
Next morning away, before the dawn did peep.

NOTE.—Among the trophies of the Union army were a brigade of unwounded prisoners and many stands of colors. The horrid piles of dead men and animals told with dreadful eloquence who were the conquerors; and all the night the rain poured down, and the hills and the woods on both sides resounded with dismal groans of dying men.

THE BATTLE OF TEL-EL-KEBIR (EGYPT).

It was night, dark and still;
Not a voice or trumpet sounded,
When the British advanced, as soldiers will,
While Arabs o'er the sand-hills bounded.

Six miles they had marched, when at dawn of light
The enemy's earthworks came in sight;
Then commenced the fearful fight,
The rebels were charged and put to flight.

With bayonets fixed, the trenches are taken,
The Arabs have the guns forsaken;
With grape and canister ranks are shaken,
At all points the enemy is beaten.

Each regiment o'er the ramparts makes its way,
Marking with death its track, and great dismay.
Cheer after cheer went up that day,
While the sun sent down its fervid ray.

The British cavalry on the right, sabres flashing;
Horse artillery like lightning passing;
Then with shell the rebels crashing,
While Royal Irish and Scotch went in dashing.

The Bengal cavalry fly o'er the plain,
Horse in hand, with flowing mane,
Checked at will by bridle rein,
Sabring the Arabs in twain.

NOTE.—“I resolved, therefore, to attack before daylight; marched the six miles that intervened between my camp and the enemy's position in darkness.”

GENERAL WOLSELEY.

GENERAL GRAHAM'S ADVANCE FROM SUAKIM.

The British advanced in an oblong square,
Rebels attacked them, front, flank and rear ;
But the English met them everywhere,
And Martini rifles dropped them there.

The enemy charged the British line,
Over carcasses, dead men and dying ;
Those brave men, so fierce and sublime,
The English gave them little time.

The Scots advanced as if on parade,
The highland fling their bagpipes played ;
Baker Pasha's defeat was well repaid,
Fifteen hundred dead on the field were laid.

Trenches full of dying and dead,
The white sand dyed crimson red ;
Colonel Burnaby those brave soldiers led,
To death in glory—the warrior's bed.

The British Army at the present day
Impregnable seems in battle array ;
Like a breastwork make of clay,
It nor steel nor shot can sway.

Composed it is of three elements in one :—
The Irish soldier can starve and fight on ;
The English, when hungry, are half gone,
And the Scotch advance with a highland song.

ON A SKULL.

This dust was once ambition's lofty hall,
Where the soul reposed within its bony wall.
Man's destiny 's decay, alike to all
Since Adam's and poor Eve's downfall.

It 's well to be reminded we are dust,
And not in man to put our trust.
The noblest striving of the mind
Is for noble deeds and thoughts refined.

In the boundless extent of the ocean
The sea oft' runs mountain high,
And when calm, there floats man's portion—
Dust and ashes drifting by.

THE LAST NORTH POLE EXPEDITION.

What scenes of agony—what thoughts and dreams!
What moans—distorted features—what a terror reigns!
Starvation, insanity, till death the victim claims.
Poor man's ambition, where are thy gains?

This horrid picture will ne'er be known;
The flesh cut from the human bone!
What misery in that frigid zone,
Where men expire so far from friends and home!

Last rays of hope they see recede,
The cheeks fall in, the teeth now crash;
The palace of the mind is gone, the soul is freed,
And leaves the body like a flash.

O unforeseen events! O failing foresight!
Who is to blame for this disaster?
Authorities did what they thought right,
But forgot to supply the caster.

Poor Henry was shot for his good appetite—
Hunger has no bounds, day or night—
His commander ordered him out of sight,
So he could not get another bite.

Why not leave those men where they died,
In the frigid zone, side by side;
And erect a monument to guide
The world to the spot of America's pride?

THE SCOTT STATUE AT THE SOLDIERS' HOME.

On you green knoll we see the effigy of Scott,
Whose brilliant name shall live forever!
He triumphed over Mexico. Forget him not!
Besides he won a million treasure.

And with this money he purchased the Soldiers' Home,
To aid the soldier old and cripple;
And, similar to Romulus, who founded Rome,
He builded near the Tiber's ripple.*

And ne'er did he forget the brave and faithful soldier
Who marched and fought with him, side by side.
There are no troops now who are more brave, or bolder,
Than those that fought with Scott, the Nation's pride.

* The Tiber creek in the District of Columbia.

OLD SOLDIER'S MEDITATION.

Who would not flee from the bloody field
After carnage and dreadful battle,
Where friend as well as foe must yield
To bayonet, sword, and muskets' rattle?

Unsheath your sword where honor calls;
Fight for your firesides and home;
Battle to the last for the outward walls,
Until a single stone is left alone.

And if you fall in this good cause
You have done a noble duty;
Even your enemy will give applause,
And deck your grave with flowers of beauty.

THE SOLDIERS' CEMETERY AT THE HOME.

What silence reigns where thousands sleep beneath the sod!
The troopers' tramp, or roar of cannon, or musket rattle
Do not disturb the soldier in his last nod;
He fell on the field in the din of battle.

Those men, once in the ranks, with glittering steel,
Undauntedly advanced to meet the foe;
Caused death and carnage, made columns reel,
And scattered squadrons, rank and row.

The horse, not less gallant than man,
When the trumpeter sounds the charge,
Plunges forward to the battle's van,
The heaps of dead to enlarge.

Within these grounds lie near ten thousand dead;
No voice, all 's still except the warbler's song
Above the grave of him who once in battle led.
At night, with dusky wings the screech owls fly along.

A FLOWER ON A GRAVE BEFORE A HALL
DOOR IN VIRGINIA.

Touch not that place. On this blooming spot
My brother fell, by a stray bullet shot.
Over him bloom rose and forget-me-not.
Three sisters left to mourn in deepest sorrow—
My parents, old, may pass away to-morrow.
Oh, cruel war's destruction and inhuman horror!
At the cottage door three sisters, dressed in mourning,
With tearful eyes, their hair like raven's wing;
The youngest wore her brother's favorite ring.
The sight unnerved the old soldier's pride.
My sword rattled by my side,
I raised my hat, and away did ride;—
That night in sorrow I prayed and cried.

LINES ON A YOUNG GIRL'S GRAVE IN A
GROVE AT HAREWOOD IN THE
SOLDIERS' HOME.

Touch not that flower! In crystal tears
It weeps for her who sleeps below;
That rose, faded in blushing years,
Took flight away to bloom and grow.
Her eyes flashed from under silken fringe;
Cheeks touched with a rosy tinge;
Auburn hair in gold-like rings;
Teeth lily-white, set in pearly rows.
Pause, wanderer, when this grave you see:
Under this weeping willow tree
Father and mother rest with me.

AN INCIDENT AT THE BATTLE OF FIVE FORKS.

The battle raged as the sun was retiring,
The cannon roaring, the infantry firing;
Through the smoke I espied a girl, inspiring,*
With flask in hand, the nectar dividing.

Her cheeks red as rose, lips tinged the same,
Eyes bright as the silver moon's beam,
And her black plume floating—sign of honor and fame—
As she left the field where her brother was slain.

On she dashed, as a lily fine,
Saluted me, said, "Oh, my brother is dying!"
And then she burst into crying.
I gave her Mazeppa,† and away she went flying.

* The lady in question I met in the woods as she was returning from the battle field.

† Mazeppa was the name of a favorite horse of mine.

